

what's under the hood?

the mechanics of leadership versus management

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Believe it or not, there are those rare individuals in the world of work who describe themselves as “great managers.”

Focusing primarily on the enterprise's revenues, this professional tends to be a master at organizing a workforce in meeting or exceeding annual profit projections. Typically, great managers have staked their reputations, if not their careers, on maintaining bottom-line results for the betterment of the organization. While perhaps losing sight of a commonly accepted business truth — it's “all” the members of any workforce who ultimately make things happen — a great manager more often than not runs the risk of being labeled an “ogre” by subordinates for an unrelenting dedications to the monthly P&L statements.

Yet, there are others out there who would scoff at the title “manager,” qualifying themselves as a class of “good leaders.”

Typically, good leaders sacrifice micromanagement of the bottom-line in favor of a macroscopic understanding of the enterprise, its associates and its strategic direction. While it has never been conclusively proven leaders produce lower profits than managers, they do tend to create more inspired, more empowered associates — willing to serve to the ends of the Earth — and leaders are significantly less likely to be deemed a “workaholic,” “ogre” or “bossmonster” by their associates or colleagues.

Despite arguments to the contrary, there are fundamental differences in the philosophical approaches to management versus leadership. While these differences

are not as definitive as night and day, they do draw unique contrast with one another while also complementing related competencies.

Leadership **(1) Visionary**

Articulating a strategic direction for the enterprise in a clear and compelling manner, the leader fosters relationships founded on trust and respect with all stakeholders, not just the shareholders, of the organization. Professionally, a leader dissects business situations with a view to the future while maintaining a firm grasp of the enterprise's current elements (product line, corporate philosophy, workforce, etc.). Remaining true to the core and functional competencies necessary to support the vision, the leader

understands the associate's perspective and only endorses action that integrates the associate's needs. With a knack for prophecy, a leader investigates, recommends and implements activity with appreciation of the enterprise and the associates' interests.

Personally, a leader understands the present staff is, even today, learning by doing; they are collectively taking steps in the direction of becoming the productive workforce they ultimately will be. A leader sees beyond the immediacy of decisions, exercising the ability to often predict the effects of actions, policy and even words. In order to maintain status as a prophet, a leader keeps up with current industry research and best practices in hopes of benefiting the enterprise with such knowledge.

Additionally, the leader will seek out self-improvement opportunities in order to meet personal career objectives.

(2) Collaborator

The leader sets an example and leads through it. This has been called "collaborating with the vision."

By doing so, a leader demonstrates a clear understanding of the strategic direction of the enterprise in aligning work and personal behavior with that vision.

In such a way, a leader develops an organization and a corporate culture that

encourages, supports and rewards individual and team achievements.

In addition, a leader surrenders "the self to the squad," collaborating at all times with associates to help them.

Adapting his/her management style to the unique needs of individuals, a leader displays an understanding that truly meritorious effort should be spent on eliminating barriers to superior associate performance. He/she engages willingly in coaching, feedback, recognition, brainstorming and mentoring in order to maximize the enterprise's results.

Lastly, the successful leader defies limitations. He/she works effectively not only with his/her immediate work group but also those outside the formal line of authority in order to accomplish any of the enterprise's goals.

(3) Salesperson

Demonstrating a charismatic self-assurance of ideas, judgments and capabilities, a leader tactically influences others within the enterprise through participation in all processes and decision-making.

The goal is elementary: a leader seeks an organization that supports individual and team achievement, and therefore he/she works at building and sustaining group cohesion through mutual trust and respect. Once the enterprise has its professional dynamic, the leader manages to it.

To accomplish the challenge of creating unity, a leader will provide his enterprise with the vision,

direction and inspiration necessary for its continued longevity.

He/she maintains good rapport with all departments of the enterprise, and he/she gets to know (in great detail) the people and resources that can provide assistance.

(4) Negotiator

Ever the focused optimist during tough times as well as the good, the leader espouses one guiding premise: "change" is the new corporate religion. As someone once said, "The past is only reference, not residence."

The leader reacts and adjusts positively to new ways of accomplishing tasks. First and foremost on the leader's mind is making the tough decisions that ensure associate satisfaction and departmental efficiency. To that end, most leaders willingly serve as self-fueled process improvement "think tanks" or change agent specialists, developing imaginative solutions to solving problems despite the element of risk. Critical to the leader's perspective is his/her ability to enhance existing processes and procedures that ensure associate satisfaction and departmental efficiency. Setbacks are inevitable and, therefore, embraced rather than shunned, for it is only in failure that we learn. However, because risk persists, the leader will not sacrifice common sense or sound business judgment solely for the sake of change. Serving as a catalyst for positive organizational turbulence, a leader will assist

managers and associates in responding effectively to new circumstances in the workplace.

Ever resilient, the leader will actively seek assignments, guidance and feedback that are necessary in order to prepare for handling current or future objectives.

Management

(1) Captain

Displaying energy and initiative, the manager develops and applies personal knowledge of the business, products, systems and technology to advance the enterprise's agenda. This applied knowledge will not only include industry specifics, but also involve applying industry terminology, paper-flow and structure to problem solving, communication, training and implementation. Additionally, the successful manager will often interpret the laws, regulations, policies and procedures that impact (positively or negatively) the associates in order to ensure a productive working environment.

Accepting feedback and criticism professionally and constructively, the manager assumes ownership for work by setting priorities and utilizing department resources. Not only does the manager add economic value through the strategic use of the enterprise's programs and practices, he/she also understands and applies corporate procedures and departmental standards to consistently produce error-free

results in a timely manner. He/she ensures the team is striving to overcome obstacles before seeking support.

(2) Analyst

Possessing keen analytical skills coupled with a grasp of the enterprise's budget, the successful manager works diligently to gather current and accurate information about situations and technology. Without it, the manager cannot (and will not) make educated decisions on behalf of the organization. Before engaging a course of action, the manager conducts an in-depth analysis of the requirements and specifications in order to determine which course will deliver maximum results. Additionally, he/she uses this information to drive his/her own learning as well as nurturing the business' continued success. After careful review of all the collected data and alternatives, only then will the manager make timely decisions.

Understanding talent is what will make any department efficient, the manager analyzes, designs, recommends and administers a fair and equitable reward system to attract, motivate and retain qualified associates.

(3) Conductor

Focusing on potential business opportunities, the successful manager understands the differences and similarities between individual, departmental and enterprise goals. Like a workhorse, the manager endeavors

to accomplish all of them, applying knowledge and training to support whatever the need. His/her emphasis will remain on the client: understanding their needs, the manager will take actions necessary to either integrate or balance them with the enterprise's products and strategic direction. At all times, the manager will use whatever resources are appropriate to identify issues, plan work, eliminate concerns, resolve problems and make the necessary adjustments to reach optimum performance.

In determining key personnel to fill out a results-driven team, a manager analyzes departmental needs, selects the best-qualified candidates and assigns tasks based on skills and abilities. Reaching outside of the sphere of influence, the manager will also organize, gain the involvement of and manage diverse work groups and/or task forces to achieve specific project or enterprise goals.

(4) Controller

For the manager, an accurate picture of the enterprise's profitability can only be achieved through careful consideration of all of the details comprising typical business activity. This examination starts with the basics: a review of common elements of success, and it extends all the way to determination of obstacles to performance in the workplace.

By demanding work performed to the best of any

associate’s ability, a manager’s primary objective is simple: meeting or exceeding professional, enterprise, task force or departmental goals. Through an exhaustive examination of data meant to identify the most critical components of exemplary performance, the successful manager recognizes trends, inconsistencies, deficiencies, and impact, he/she never loses focus of monitoring results, controlling resources (including employees) and modifying business activity to better achieve project plan. However, the manager always demonstrates sensitivity to the impact of change on the individuals who are aiding in the achievements.

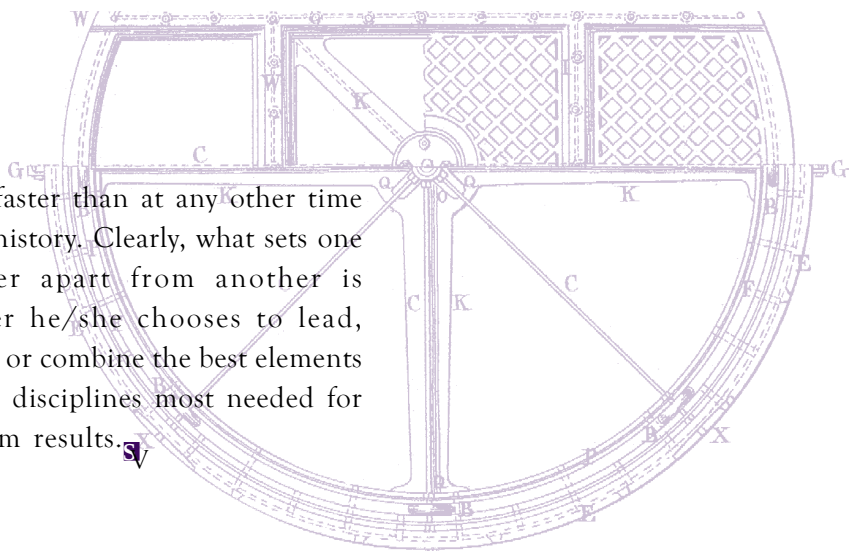
The exceptional manager identifies client problems and maintains ownership until the issue is fully resolved, providing the client with detailed follow-up. Those issues that fall outside the manager’s sphere of influence are appropriately escalated to the proper department’s staff.

To Lead Or Not To Lead

While management and leadership do have their philosophical differences, they both share the common element of attaining goals.

If the goal becomes the team’s destination, then the method (i.e. management versus leadership) is the journey, and there are many roads available to the successful professional in today’s competitive world. The strategies and practices that ensure success are limitless as work-place technology continues to

evolve faster than at any other time in our history. Clearly, what sets one manager apart from another is whether he/she chooses to lead, manage or combine the best elements of both disciplines most needed for optimum results.



Ed Zimmerman is a professional in the human resources field and has worked with hundreds of managers and leaders to capture a variety of supervisory experiences.

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